



Response from Nidhi Thakar, SVP of Policy for the Clean Energy Buyers Association, to Third Way's Pathways to Accelerating Clean Energy Report

Oct. 30, 2025

The findings in Third Way's Pathways to Accelerating Clean Energy (PACE) report overlaps significantly with many priorities for the Clean Energy Buyers Association (CEBA), including the need to adjust permitting and interconnection processes to get more energy infrastructure built. It's no secret that the U.S. must rapidly scale up clean energy resources – both firm and renewables – and transmission infrastructure to meet unprecedented electricity load growth. However, current federal permitting systems are lengthy, fragmented, and overly complex — which poses a major barrier to solar and transmission deployment, as evidenced by the findings of the PACE study. Projects often face years of delay due to overlapping agency reviews, inconsistent standards, and litigation risks. This permitting process discourages private investment, stalls deployment, and prevents the grid from integrating low-cost, clean energy at scale.

CEBA's [Beyond the Megawatt initiative](#) offers principles for responsible permitting, particularly around stakeholder engagement, which is reflected in some of the survey data.

Overall, the PACE report underscores the market-wide permitting barriers that are slowing the deployment of solar and transmission projects across local, state, and federal jurisdictions. These delays directly affect the ability of large electricity customers to access affordable, reliable carbon emissions-free energy at the scale required to meet current and future load. The report's recommended permitting reforms offer a path to shorten project timelines and reduce uncertainty — both of which are essential for controlling energy costs, ensuring grid reliability, and meeting corporate clean energy and economic growth objectives.

The PACE report offers valuable insights and raises several questions. The geographic distribution of responses focuses on some key solar states, such as Texas and California, which gives us a good snapshot on the significance of the problem. By looking at other key states, such as North and South Carolina, we can understand at a deeper level how significant the problem is and how best to address siting and permitting, particularly at state and local levels.

The report effectively highlights key areas for improvement. The Federal Permitting Improvement Steering Council has a potential leadership role in streamlining and managing critical permitting processes and data for FAST-41 projects as public transparency and enforceable timelines are critical for streamlining permitting and ensuring agency accountability. Changes to current statutes would be required. Additionally, the use of AI tools to accelerate permitting and interconnection — already underway at the California grid operator and other regional transmission organizations — represents a promising path forward.

While the report seems to focus on generator interconnection rather than load, addressing speculative load through threshold requirements like financing commitments could also help reduce interconnection delays. Ultimately, accurate forecasting and transparent processes are key to enabling the clean energy procurement timelines that corporate buyers depend on.

In the months ahead, there is potential for significant reform to the nation's infrastructure permitting processes. Congress, the White House, and federal agencies are actively considering policies to hasten the development of electricity generation and transmission projects. CEBA supported key provisions — interregional transmission planning, dual pathways for transmission project approvals, and reforms to the National Environmental Policy Act — in the 118th Congress and is now working to advance similar policies in the months ahead.

CEBA is also advocating for continued funding from the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) for transmission initiatives, including the Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnerships Program, the Transmission Facilitation Program, and the Grid Resilience State & Tribal Formula Grant Program. Additionally, CEBA is engaging with the DOE Loan Programs Office to enhance support for transmission funding.

In sum, the PACE report provides a concrete launchpad to understanding the market-wide permitting and interconnection barriers that are slowing the deployment of solar and transmission projects across local, state, and federal jurisdictions.

The Clean Energy Buyers Association is a business trade association that activates a community of energy customers and partners to deploy market and policy solutions for a carbon emissions-free energy system. CEBA's more than 400 members comprise one-fifth of the Fortune 500, represent more than \$37 trillion in market capitalization, and include institutional energy customers of every type and size – corporate and industrial companies, universities, and cities. For more information, visit cebuyers.org and follow us on [X](#) and [LinkedIn](#).
